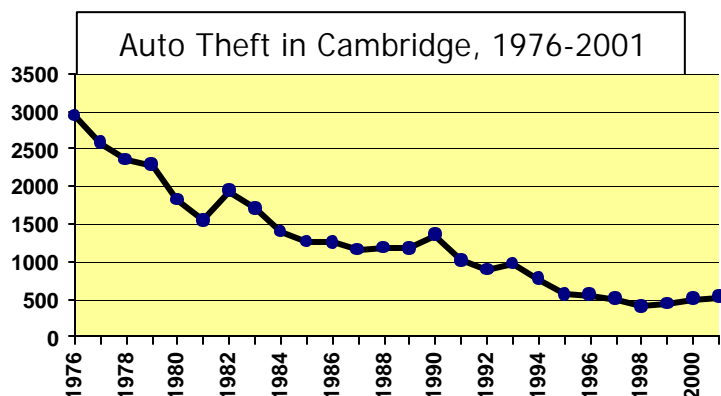


# Auto Theft

498 in 2000 · 526 in 2001 · 6% Increase



Defined as the theft or attempted theft of a motor vehicle, this offense category includes the theft of automobiles, trucks, buses, motorcycles, motor scooters, and snowmobiles. This definition excludes the taking of a motor vehicle for temporary use by persons having lawful access.

Although there has been an increase in auto theft for the past three years, the total for 2001, 526, is drastically lower than 25 years ago, 2,936. The 6% increase marks a 82% decrease from 25 years ago and 43% from 10 years ago. The 1998 total was the lowest in over 35 years. Statistics for auto theft are considered highly reliable because almost all auto thefts are reported to the police.

More than any other crime, auto theft has been positively influenced by effective law enforcement activity. This steady decline can be attributed to the near elimination of "chop shops" that trade in stolen parts and interstate auto theft rings (in part by the Governor's Auto Theft Strike Force); crackdowns on insurance fraud; advances in automobile security; and new technologies that enable patrol officers to quickly check a vehicle's registry listing and determine if it is stolen. The result is that "for profit" thefts are nearly a thing of the past. Most of today's auto thieves are joy riders or people looking for short-term transportation; over 80% of stolen cars are

recovered relatively intact, usually within five days of being stolen.

## Geography

Cambridgeport, Area 4, and North Cambridge round out the top three for total thefts. Cambridgeport and Area 4 were in the top 3 in 2000 and the 1990's, accompanied by East Cambridge. This year however North Cambridge has broke into the top three with its 64% increase from 2000's total and the 28% decrease of thefts from East Cambridge's auto thefts. Area 4 and Cambridgeport's high totals come from their dense residential populations and their Central Square area commercial parking lots. East Cambridge has some of the densest commercial parking in the city.

MIT traditionally records 70-80% of its thefts on Vassar Street, but 2001 only reported 40% from this street. Fifty percent of the auto thefts in North

## Auto Theft by Neighborhood

Neighborhood	1990s Average	1999	2000	2001	Change 00-01	% of 01 Total	1990s Rank	2001 Rank
East Cambridge	87	67	78	56	-28%	16%	2	4
MIT	58	34	31	17	-45%	6%	6	10
Inman/Harrington	50	28	40	32	-20%	8%	7	8
Area 4	77	64	95	74	-22%	20%	3	2
Cambridgeport	88	57	64	80	+25%	13%	1	1
Mid-Cambridge	72	30	49	50	+2%	10%	4/5	5
Riverside	43	36	26	38	+46%	5%	10	7
Agassiz	21	11	12	13	+8%	2%	11	12
Peabody	44	27	30	40	+33%	6%	9	6
West Cambridge	45	23	20	28	+40%	4%	8	9
North Cambridge	72	38	36	59	+64%	7%	4/5	3
Highlands	16	10	12	11	-8%	2%	12	13
Strawberry Hill	9	6	5	14	+180%	1%	13	11

Cambridge occurred along the apartment buildings on Rindge Avenue, up from last year's 44%.

Strawberry Hill is the only neighborhood that had more thefts than the nineties average, marking a drastic 180% increase from its 2000 total, the most of any neighborhood. North Cambridge also marked a large increase of 64%, placing this neighborhood in the top three for auto thefts, with most breaks coming from the apartment buildings on Rindge Avenue. MIT reported the largest decrease, 45%, of any neighborhood. This may be a result of MIT students reporting thefts to the MIT police, not Cambridge.

## Targets

The Honda Accord is almost always at the top of the auto theft list with the exception of 1999. As usual, the Toyota Camry and the Honda Civic round out the top three.

Makes		Models	
Honda	99	Honda Accord	44
Toyota	70	Toyota Camry	39
Ford	53	Honda Civic	39
Acura	32	Acura Integra	22
Chevrolet	23	Toyota Corolla	18
Dodge	15	Ford Escort	10
Nissan	15	Jeep Cherokee	9
Jeep	14	Dodge Caravan	8
Mitsubishi	12	Acura Legend	8
Buick	10	Toyota Tercel	8

There have been changes made to the list: Mazda has dropped off the makes list (10 in 2000, 6 in 2001) as Buick has reappeared on the list with 10 this year. The Toyota Tercel has reappeared on the list of models. Despite the fact the Ford Explorer was stolen more in 2001 (7) than 2000 (5), the SUV fell from the top ten list.

For the past several years, late 1980s model Camrys, Accords, Corollas, and Civics have topped the list of stolen cars. The fact that these particular models are stolen more than any other is a function of several factors. First, these cars are some of the most commonly owned models in the nation, making them more widely available. Simple statistical probability would place them at the top of any theft list. Second, car thieves tend to look for average-cost, commonly owned, inconspicuous cars. High-priced luxury cars are not stolen very often because they are too easy for someone to spot. Finally, if profit is the motivation behind the theft, parts for older-model, commonly owned vehicles are more in demand.

## Recoveries

As of this report, 88% of the vehicles stolen from Cambridge in 2001 have since been recovered. Most of our recoveries continue to come from the

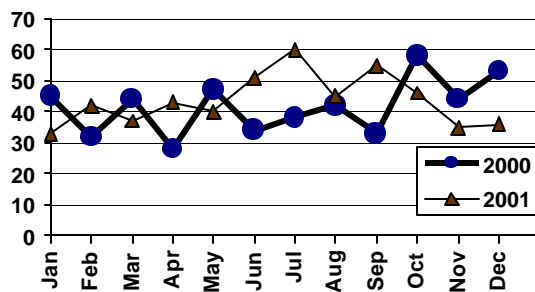
Dorchester and Roxbury sections of Boston, the city of Somerville, and the North Cambridge neighborhood in Cambridge. Vehicles have been recovered as far away as the Bronx, NY and St. Louis. Most recovered vehicles show damage to one of the doors and to the ignition or the steering column. About half of the recovered vehicles have items missing, such as the stereo, car phone or other items left in the car. The following cities are the most likely recovery sites:

City/Neighborhood	Recoveries
<b>Boston</b>	
Downtown/Beacon Hill/Chinatown	0
East Boston	7
Charlestown	3
Roxbury/Mission Hill	28
Mattapan	2
South Boston	2
Dorchester	32
Back Bay/South End/Fenway	0
Allston/Brighton	10
West Roxbury/Roslindale	4
Jamaica Plain	10
Unknown	37
<b>Cambridge</b>	
East Cambridge	1
MIT	2
Inman/Harrington	4
Area 4	4
Cambridgeport	3
Mid-Cambridge	1
Riverside	2
Agassiz	1
Peabody	2
West Cambridge	1
North Cambridge	6
Highlands	1
Strawberry Hill	3
Unknown	37
<b>Somerville</b>	15
<b>Medford</b>	5
<b>Everett</b>	4
<b>Arlington</b>	4
<b>Belmont</b>	3
<b>Chelsea</b>	3
<b>Revere</b>	3
<b>Lynn</b>	3

## Offenders

The Cambridge Police Department arrested 10 people for auto theft or receiving stolen property in 2001. Offenders' ages ranged from 18 to 55, with an average age of 30. There were two domestic cases: a victim's wife and a boyfriend. Two of the offenders were from Cambridge (one from the Cambridgeport neighborhood and one from the East Cambridge neighborhood); two homeless men, one man was from Dorchester, one woman who did not return her rental car and one was a valet who drove away after getting the keys.

## Seasonal Variations



For the first five months, the season trends were reversed between 2000 and 2001. Between May and July, the pattern followed the traditional summer upward trend. However in August there was a sharp decrease only to increase again in September followed by two months of decreased thefts.

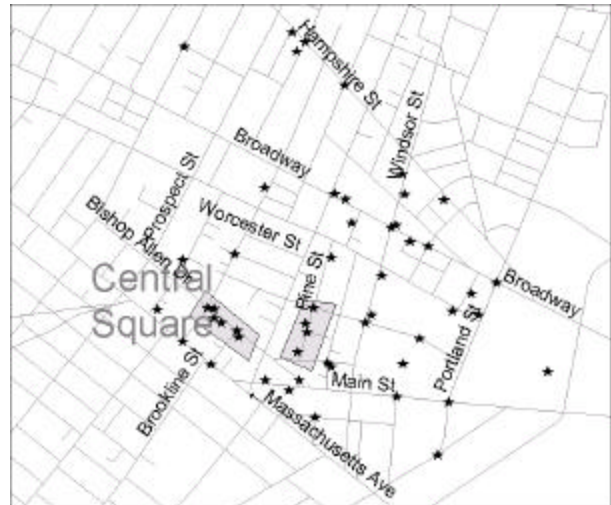
## Top Auto Theft Hot Spots in 2001:

### Cambridgeport



With the Cambridgeport area recording the most auto thefts for 2001, there was a 25% increase from 2000. The Parking garages/lot at 777, 767 Memorial Drive and 220 Massachusetts Avenue experienced 20 auto thefts, 25% of the total thefts. The thefts were concentrated between Thursdays and Sundays. Recoveries were reported in Dorchester, Roxbury, and Jamaica Plain with extensive body and ignition damage.

### Area 4



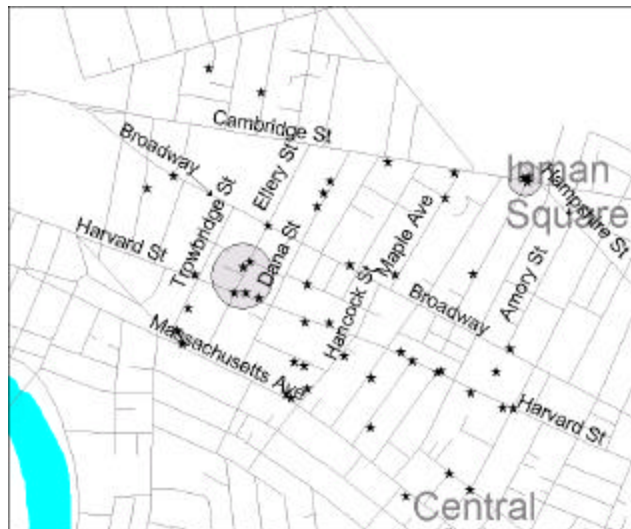
Area 4 has recorded the second most auto thefts of all neighborhoods, last year this neighborhood was first. The areas of Bishop Allen Drive, Pine Street, reported the highest concentration of thefts. A pattern in these areas emerged between Fridays and Mondays between 10 p.m. and 1 a.m. Over 56% of the auto thefts were recovered. Recoveries were reported in Cambridge, Mattapan, Boston, Dorchester, Roxbury, Somerville, and as far away as the Bronx. Most of the vehicles suffered various body damage and reported radios missing.

### Rindge Avenue Apartments



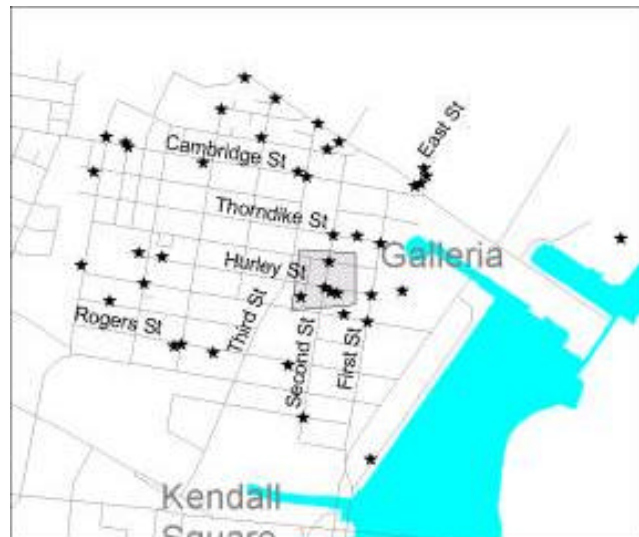
Eighteen auto thefts were reported from the lot shared by three large apartment buildings between 354-402 Rindge Avenue, set in North Cambridge. All the incidents occurred in May or later, except for one incident in February. Theft occurred mainly on the weekends and occasionally during Mid-Week. 67% of the cars stolen were recovered. Most reported some damage, but the damage varied.

## Mid-Cambridge



In Mid-Cambridge there were several thefts that occurred within the Harvard Street and Ellery Street area, as well as numerous breaks at the intersection of Hampshire St and Cambridge Street, and along Harvard Street. Most of the breaks in this neighborhood occurred over the weekend from 10:00 pm to 2:00 am. 56% of all vehicles were recovered from Cambridge, Somerville, various neighborhoods within Boston, New Bedford, Dracut, and Lowell. Most vehicles reported being stripped, as well as other exterior damage.

## First/Second/Hurley/East Streets



First, Second, Thorndike, and East Streets in East Cambridge reported a cluster of auto thefts this year. Thefts occurred during the mid-week and weekends, with a high concentration on Wednesdays and Fridays. Thieves targeted cars parked on streets near the Galleria Mall throughout the day. Thefts increased during the summer months. 50% of the vehicles were recovered. Most vehicles reported damage to the interior, including ignition damage.